

I. CLAIM AMENDMENTS

We claim:

Claims 109 to 185 (Withdrawn)

186. (Currently Amended) A plurality of composite particles comprising:

a mixture of bentonite ~~and~~, expanded perlite, and activated carbon formed into a plurality of homogeneously agglomerated composite particles suitable for use as an animal litter, wherein substantially each homogeneously agglomerated composite particle contains a percentage of bentonite ~~and~~, a percentage of expanded perlite and a percentage of activated carbon.

wherein the clump strength, an indication of the percentage of particles retained in a clump after six hours upon addition of an aqueous solution, is greater than 90%.

187. (Cancelled)

188. (Cancelled)

189. (Currently Amended) The plurality of composite particles recited in claim ~~187~~ 186, wherein the activated carbon is powdered activated carbon (PAC).

190. (Currently Amended) The plurality of composite particles as recited in claim ~~187~~ 189, wherein the activated carbon is present in about 5 weight percent or less.

191. (Previously Presented) The plurality of composite particles as recited in claim 186, wherein said homogeneously agglomerated composite particles range in size from 100 μ m to 10 mm.

192. (Previously Presented) The plurality of composite particles as recited in claim 186, wherein said homogeneously agglomerated composite particles range in size from 400-1650 μm .

193. (Cancelled)

194. (Cancelled)

195. (Currently Amended) The plurality of composite particles as recited in claim 186, wherein said homogeneously agglomerated composite particles have a bulk density ~~between 0.35-~~ less than 0.5 g/cc.

196. (Cancelled)

197. (Currently Amended) The plurality of composite particles recited in claim 186, further comprising at least one of an antimicrobial, an odor control boron-containing material, a binder, a fragrance, a health indicating material, a color altering agent, a dust reducing agent, a nonstick release agent, a superabsorbent material, cyclodextrin, zeolite, a pH altering agent, a salt forming material, a ricinoleate and mixtures thereof.

198. (New) The plurality of composite particles recited in claim 186, wherein the composite particles have a moisture content of less than about 15% by weight based on a weight of the composite particle.

199. (New) The plurality of composite particles recited in claim 198, wherein the composite particles have a moisture content of less than about 10% by weight based on a weight of the composite particle.

200. (New) The plurality of composite particles recited in claim 186, wherein the plurality of homogeneously agglomerated composite particles have a hydraulic conductivity value of about 0.25 cm/s or less.

201. (New) The plurality of composite particles recited in claim 186, wherein the composite particle is capable of absorbing a weight of water equaling at least about 90 percent of a weight of the composite particle.

202. (New) The plurality of composite particles recited in claim 201, wherein the composite particle is capable of absorbing a weight of water equaling at least about 75 percent of a weight of the composite particle

203. (New) The plurality of composite particles recited in claim 186, wherein the composite particles have a dusting attrition value of at most about 15% as measured by ASTM method E-728 Standard Test Method for Resistance to Attrition of Granular Carriers and Granular Pesticides.

204. (New) The plurality of composite particles recited in claim 186, wherein the composite particles have a malodor rating below about 15 as determined by a Malodor Sensory Method.

205. (New) The plurality of composite particles recited in claim 186 wherein the clump strength, is greater than 95%.

206. (New) A process for making the plurality of composite particles recited in claim 186, comprising:

- adding granules of bentonite and expanded perlite to an agglomerator, wherein the granules of bentonite and expanded perlite each have a particle size smaller than about 1000 microns;
- adding granules of an activated carbon to the agglomerator;
- adding water to the agglomerator; and
- agglomerating the mixture of bentonite, expanded perlite, activated carbon and water to form a plurality of homogeneously agglomerated composite particles of bentonite, expanded perlite, and activated carbon.

207. (New) The process as recited in claim 206, wherein the agglomeration process is at least one of a pan agglomeration, a high shear agglomeration process, a low shear agglomeration process, a high pressure agglomeration process, a low pressure agglomeration process, a rotary drum agglomeration process, a fluid bed agglomeration process, a mix muller process, a roll press compaction process, a pin mixer process, a batch tumble blending mixer process, an extrusion process and a fluid bed process.:

208. (New) The process as recited in claim 206, further comprising adding granules of at least one of an odor control boron-containing material, an antimicrobial, a binder, a fragrance, a health indicating material, a color altering agent, a dust reducing agent, a nonstick release agent, a superabsorbent material, cyclodextrin, zeolite, activated carbon, a pH altering agent, a salt forming material, a ricinoleate and mixtures thereof.